

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Jeff Fortenberry today issued the following statement as the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) mandate took effect:

"The mandate from President Obama and Secretary Sebelius uses the strong arm of government to force Americans to pay for drugs and procedures, including abortion-inducing drugs, which many Americans find to be ethically divisive. The mandate most perniciously affects faith-based providers who are on the front lines, serving as the main source of compassionate care for our most vulnerable and poor citizens. This day may come and pass for many Americans, but it is significant in that it represents a deep affront to our most honored traditions – that of religious liberty and the rights of conscience.

"The HHS mandate represents unprecedented government coercion in health care. No American should be forced to choose between their faith and their job. That's a false choice. That's un-American. It violates the fundamental principle of religious freedom, individual liberty, and the rights of conscience so much a part of the history of this country. I think Federal Judge John Kane in his recent ruling, *Hercules v. Sebelius*, got it right, that the government's interests 'are countered, and indeed outweighed, by the public interest in the free exercise of religion.'"

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